



## **(U) NSA's 'Oldest' Partnership -- A Debate**

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(S//SI) Last month you read about our partnership with Turkey and its virtues, including being the so-called "oldest" Third Party partner. (See [article](#).) Well, following some good-natured discourse and debate, it appears that "oldest" is in the eyes of the beholder.

(S//SI) A review of Dr. Tom Johnson's history of NSA, "American Cryptology during the Cold War 1945-1989," tells us that there were SIGINT exchanges with Third Party nations that preceded 1948. Whether these were actually with NSA (which did not exist until 1952), or CIA, or whether they were actually relationships or merely an exchange of traffic for some quid (usually US dollars) or some other form of quasi-Third Party relationship is the center of this debate.

(S//SI) The Johnson history, as well as the Las Casas History of NSA's SIGINT Foreign Relationships, reveals the following timelines:

- A COMINT relationship was established by the OSS with the Italian navy almost as soon as Italy left the war in 1943.
- The relationship with Norway was initiated by CIA in 1948, but it was labeled an "informal" relationship, formalized in 1952.
- Probably the earliest "Mil-to-Mil" (using today's terminology) was the relationship between the US Army and remnants of the German SIGINT element following the Allied victory in 1945.
- Herbert O. Yardley assisted Nationalist China's Chiang Kai-shek with COMINT and COMSEC for two years in the 1930s, hardly a precursor for today's relationship with Taiwan.

(U//FOUO) All this said, perhaps the point is that "oldest" can be a relative term. What is not debatable, however, is the depth of trust that has endured over time, and the benefit to each nation in these partnerships. Finally, I would not be surprised to find out that there could be other, even earlier points in these relationships. I would be happy to discuss these off-line, and if needed, summarize for a subsequent Digest.

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